

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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R 090833Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO AMEMBASSY MANILA

INFO USIA WASHDC

SECSTATE WASHDC 7300

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USIAC

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: BURMA POSTAL AND CLEARANCE PROCEDURES

REF: MANILA 10625

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THE REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE GUB CONCERNING PUBLICATIONS DISTRIBUTED BY FOREIGN MISSIONS ARE VERY RESTRICTIVE, THEY ARE APPLIED ACROSS THE BOARD TO ALL MISSIONS AND ALLOW SUFFICIENT FLEXIBILITY TO MAINTAIN A FLOW OF MATERIALS TO OUR TARGET AUDIENCE MEMBERS. THESE RESTRICTIONS, DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES OF PUBLISHING BURMESE MATERIALS LOCALLY RATHER THAN AT RSC MANILA, ARE PROBABLY IN OUR INTEREST OVERALL. THERE IS RELATIVELY LITTLE PRINTED "BLACK PROPAGANDA" CIRCULATED IN BURMA AND USIS OUTPUT COMPARES FAVORABLY BOTH IN QUANTITY AND IN QUALITY WITH MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED BY ANY OTHER MISSION.

1. GUB REGULATIONS GOVERNING IMPORTATION MATERIALS PRINTED IN BURMESE OUTLINED IN GUB FOREIGN OFFICE NOTE NO. 450 NGA TA 59 AUGUST 11, 1959 AND DIRECTORATE OF IMPORTS AND EXPORTS NOTIFICATION NO. 8 DATED MAY 20, 1959 WHICH READS IN PART:

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"THE IMPORT OF THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES SHALL NOT BE

PERMITTED EXCEPT WITH THE PRIOR APPROVAL IN WRITING OF
THE DIRECTOR OF IMPORTS AND EXPORTS, MINISTRY OF TRADE
DEVELOPMENT:

1. ANY BOOK PRINTED IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY IN ANY
INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE OF THE UNION OF BURMA. THE
EXPRESSION "BOOK" SHALL INCLUDE EVERY VOLUME, PART OF
DIVISION OF A VOLUME, A PAMPHLET AND EVERY SHEET OF MUSIC,
MAP, PLAN, SPEARATELY PRINTED OR LITHOGRAPHED."

2. TO THE BEST OUR KNOWLEDGE THE ONLY APPROVAL GIVEN FOR IMPORTA-
TION OF BURMESE LANGUAGE MATERIALS WAS FOR A SHIPMENT OF BURMESE
AND KACHIN LANGUAGE BIBLES WHICH ARRIVED IN RANGOON SEVERAL YEARS
AGO AND SAT IN CUSTOMS HALF A YEAR BEFORE A CABINET-LEVEL DECISION
WAS MADE TO ALLOW THIS "ONE SHIPMENT". AS RECENTLY AS LAST
MONTH, 1000 SETS (EIGHT VOLUMES) OF THE "THOUGHTS OF MAO" IN BURM-
ESE, PRINTED AND MAILED FROM CHINA, WERE CONFISCATED AND REPORTED-
LY DESTROYED BY GUB PRESS INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT. IN EXPLORING
POSSIBILITIES FOR PRODUCTION OF "CORE" MAGAZINE IN BURMESE, WE
INFORMALLY APPROACHED DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE NEWS AND PERIODICALS
CORPORATION RE POSSIBILITY OF PRINTING AT RSC MANILA IF WE PRE-
SUBMITTED MANUSCRIPTS AND "BLUEPRINTS" FOR PRESS INTELLIGENCE
APPROVAL. WE INFORMED THAT FOR UNSEEABLE FUTURE THERE WOULD

"DEFINITELY NOT" BE PERMISSION FOR THE IMPORTATION OF ANY BURMESE
LANGUAGE MATERIALS BY ANY FOREIGN NATION.

3. DESPITE THIS POLICY USIS RANGOON HAS, WITH FULL AWARENESS OF
MINISTRY INFORMATION AND CUSTOMS, IMPORTED FROM RSC MANILA THE
FOUR-COLOR COVERS FOR OUR MAGAZINES (AS DO THE SOVIETS), JACKETS
FOR TRANSLATED BOOKS, AS WELL AS PHOTO INSERTS COMPLETE WITH BURM-
ESE LANGUAGE CAPTIONS. ALL THESE MATERIALS HAVE BEEN NON-POLEMIC
AND HAVE BEEN ASSEMBLED INTO PUBLICATIONS HERE WHICH SUBJECT TO
PRESS INTELLIGENCE APPROVAL BEFORE DISTRIBUTION. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE
NOT HAD ANY DIFFICULTIES WITH IMPORTATION THESE MATERIALS, IT IS
DONE WITHOUT "PRIOR APPROVAL IN WRITING OF THE DIRECTOR OF IMPORTS
AND EXPORTS".

4. ARRANGEMENTS FOR "INFORMAL APPROVAL" WERE MADE BY THEN SEC-
RETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, U TIN TUN, WHO NOW IN PARTY
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HEADQUARTERS. AS LONG AS WE CONTINUE TO BE DISCREET IN TYPE MAT-
ERIALS WE IMPORT FROM RSC MANILA AND CONTINUE TO HAVE A REGISTERED
(WITH THE GUB) PRINTING PRESS (MULTILITH 1200) CAPABLE IN
THEORY OF PRODUCING THE TYPE OF MATERIALS WE ARE IMPORTING, WE
DO NOT FEEL WE WILL HAVE ANY DIFFICULTIES CONTINUING WHAT WE NOW
DOING. ANY ATTEMPT TO IMPORT A COMPLETE BURMESE LANGUAGE PUB-
LICATION HOWEVER WOULD PROBABLY RESULT IN SUSPENSION OF TACIT AP-
PROVAL FOR IMPORTATION OF FOUR-COLOR MATERIALS WITH BURMESE TITLES

OR CAPTIONS.

5. FOLLOWING PROCEDURES FOR IN-COUNTRY DISTRIBUTION APPLY. THESE PROCEDURES ARE OUTLINED IN SERIES OF FOREIGN OFFICE NOTES FROM NO. 401 NGA PA 62, DATED JUNE 28, 1962 TO FEBRUARY 1971:

"1. ALL BOOKS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS ETC. INCLUSIVE OF NEWS BULLETINS, REVIEWS, PERIODICALS, NEWSPAPERS, POSTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHS, WHICH ARE EITHER IMPORTED OR PRINTED OR PUBLISHED LOCALLY BY FOREIGN MISSIONS FOR DISTRIBUTION TO INDIVIDUALS, GOVERNMENT OR PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS, SHALL HENCEFORTH BE FORWARDED TO THE DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION (NOW PRESS INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT, MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS), RANGOON, FULLY ADDRESSED AND DULY AFFIXED WITH ADEQUATE POSTAGE STAMPS.

"2. THE DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION, RANGOON, WILL DECIDE ON:

- A) THE ADVISABILITY OR OTHERWISE OF DISTRIBUTING THE BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS SO RECEIVED; AND
- B) THE ADVISABILITY OR OTHERWISE OF DISTRIBUTING THEM TO THE ADDRESSEES CONCERNED.

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"3 . FIVE COPIES (ARE TO BE SENT) DIRECTLY TO THE FOREIGN

OFFICE."

THIS NOTICE, CU12/049 DATED DECEMBER 21, 1963, EXPLAINS THAT THESE PROCEDURES ARE NECESSARY BECAUSE OF THE PREVIOUS DISTRIBUTION OF "BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS WHICH EFFECT ADVERSELY BURMA'S POLICY OF STRICT NEUTRALITY AND/OR THE CORDIAL RELATIONS EXISTING BETWEEN BURMA AND OTHER COUNTRIES".

6. THESE PROCEDURES ARE STILL STRICTLY ENFORCED AND THE "THIRD COUNTRY RULE" IS APPLIED TO ALL MATERIALS. EACH INDIVIDUAL PIECE OF MATERIAL DISTRIBUTED (OR PUBLICLY DISPLAYED--PHOTOS, ETC.) IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE A PRESS INTELLIGENCE STAMP OF APPROVAL. THE ONLY CURRENT OVERLOOK OF THESE PROCEDURES BY USIS IS THE DISTRIBUTION OF PRESENTATION COPIES OF COMMERCIALY PUBLISHED ENGLISH LANGUAGE BOOKS AND SAMPLE COPIES OF CHINESE LANGUAGE PUBLICATIONS. THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAVE RECEIVED NOTES ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS FOR DISPLAYING PHOTOGRAPHS WITH APPLYING FOR APPROVAL.

7. TO EXPEDITE MOVEMENT OF SUCH MATERIALS USIS RANGOON, AND MOST OTHER LARGE MISSIONS, PROVIDE CONTRACT PERSONNEL UNDER INFORMAL ARRANGEMENT WITH THE PRESS INTELLIGENCE PEOPLE TO DO THE ACTUAL

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APPROVAL STAMPING OF PUBLICATIONS AND DELIVERY TO THE POST OFFICE. SMALLER EMBASSIES, OR THOSE WITH LESS FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH PRESS INTELLIGENCE, DELIVER THEIR MATERIALS TO THE CENSOR FOR EVENTUAL PROCESSING.

8. IN OUR WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CENSORS WE PRE-SUBMIT ARTICLES/ITEMS QUESTIONABLE UNDER BURMESE RULES BEFORE PRINTING. THIS ARRANGEMENT IS NOT PROVIDED FOR UNDER CURRENT REGULATIONS BUT HAS ALLOWED US TO "NEGOTIATE" DISTRIBUTION OF ARTICLES SUCH AS "VICTORY SOON IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DRUG TRAFFIC", HORIZONS, JANUARY 1973 (WE AGREED TO A FEW DELETIONS BUT KEPT THE GIST) WHICH WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN BANNED OR HELD FOR MONTHS BEFORE CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGED AND SUCH MATERIALS BECAME ACCEPTABLE TO THE GUB. A PROCEDURE SOMETIMES EMPLOYED BY PRESS INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT IS TO STAMP APPROVAL ON MATERIALS OF A POLEMIC NATURE COMING FROM THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, NORTH KOREANS, PRC AND THEN HAVE THEM SEIZED FOLLOWING DELIVERY AT THE POST OFFICE AND CLANDESTINELY DESTROYED...(SEVERAL OCCASIONS INVOLVING THE NORTH KOREANS AND NORTH VIETNAMESE IN RECENT WEEKS.) USUALLY HOWEVER 30 TO 50 COPIES OF ANY MATERIALS, EVEN POLEMICS, WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TO RANKING GOVERNMENT AND PARTY LEADERS--THUS, WE ARE ALLOWED TO DISTRIBUTE 'PROBLEMS OF COMMUNISM' (WITH A SPECIAL RESTRICTED DISTRIBUTION STAMP TO A PREAPPROVED LIST OF RECIPIENTS) AND OTHER MISSIONS ARE GRANTED SIMILAR ARRANGEMENTS.

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